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LETTER DATED 24 JANUARY 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SUDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

With reference to the letter addressed to Your Excellency by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations (S/1994/34), dated 14 January 1994, conveying the letter of His Excellency, the President of the State of Ericrea, I have the honour to enclose herewith the reply of the Government of the Sudan to the contents of the aforementioned letter.

I request Your Excellency to kindly circulate this reply as a document of the Security Council in all United Nations working languages.

(Signed) Ali Mohamed Osman YASSIN
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of the
Sudan to the United Nations

Annex

[Original: Arabic]

With reference to the letter dated 14 January 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea and the annexed letter from the President of Eritrea addressed to you and circulated as Security Council document S/1994/34 of 15 January 1994, the Government of the Sudan wishes to express its regret that the matter was brought to your attention. It had hoped that the issue could be addressed through the existing bilateral channels between the two countries. However, since the Government of Eritrea has chosen to bring the matter up with you, as well as with certain regional organizations and Governments, we believe we must explain the following facts:

1. The Government of the Sudan affirms its commitment to the principles of good-neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence among neighbouring countries and peoples. It also expresses its resolute determination to promote regional cooperation in the interests of peoples, countries and their stability.

2. Among the most important pillars of the Sudan's foreign policy are respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring and other States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for such regimes and Governments as may be chosen by the peoples of those States. It is particularly careful to pursue a policy of good-neighbourliness with neighbouring States and has therefore established joint ministerial committees to promote cooperation between the Sudan and neighbouring States and to solve any disputes that may arise between them.

3. The Sudan has, within the limits of its own modest abilities, provided Eritrea with every material and political assistance since the State's foundation. The Sudan helped to build the Eritrean State by dispatching manpower with various different skills and providing logistic support in all fields. It also helped to support the country's agricultural development, laying the essential foundations of Eritrean agricultural production projects by providing 100 tractors, and has provided constant supplies of food in recognition of the strong ties between the Sudanese and Eritrean peoples. It would therefore make no sense whatsoever for the Sudan to see any advantage in undermining the stability of the Eritrean regime, which it has helped to support and strengthen since independence.

4. The letter from the President of Eritrea does not refer to any involvement by Sudanese nationals in this incident. There is nothing to prove that the incident to which the President refers, if it actually occurred, was launched from Sudanese territory. It could be the work of Eritrean opposition groups opposed to the Government operating from within Eritrea itself, particularly since the country has a long Red Sea coastline across which groups opposed to the Government may seek clandestine entry.

5. The Sudanese Government does not encourage the establishment within its territory of any organizations that are hostile to regimes in neighbouring States, including our neighbour Eritrea. The Government of the Sudan has provided fraternal Eritrea with conclusive evidence of its cooperation in this

sphere and on this occasion reaffirms its continued undertaking not to provide facilities of any sort to any elements opposed to the Eritrean Government.

6. The Government of the Sudan censures and rejects its linkage to a political entity that has no official existence in the Sudan. The political entity referred to was dissolved entirely, just like the other pre-existing Sudanese political parties that were dissolved when the revolution broke out in June 1989. Accordingly, linking the so-called "National Islamic Front" to the Sudanese Government is merely a pretext for the fabrication of charges against the Government.

7. The way in which the President of Eritrea approached the question of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan is cause for intense regret and grief. It would have been more appropriate for him to express his appreciation to the Sudan, which has been hosting 500,000 Eritrean refugees for more than 30 years and sharing with them its limited resources and services, inasmuch as United Nations reports confirm that 60 per cent of hospital and school services in the Eastern Region are directed towards Eritrean refugees. Moreover, the Sudanese Government allows Eritrean refugees to pursue a number of occupations and professions and to work on agricultural projects in the area on an equal footing with Sudanese nationals. It does not treat them as third-class citizens, as was claimed in the Eritrean letter. The Government of the Sudan would have been reluctant to bring this up had it not been for the contents of the letter of the President of Eritrea, for the Eritreans are our brothers, and our treatment of them is a duty laid down by our customs, traditions, religious creeds and cultural heritage.

8. Following the referendum and the achievement of self-determination in Eritrea, the Government of the Sudan called for the return of the Eritrean refugees to their country, in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement to which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was a party, but the Eritrean Government put forward numerous excuses, asserting, for example, that it was not ready or prepared to absorb such an enormous number at the present time.

9. Now that Eritrea has become independent, we wonder about the reasons for the non-return of the Eritrean refugees to their country, if what was stated in the Eritrean President's letter about their mistreatment and exploitation is true.

10. The Government of the Sudan is fully prepared to cooperate with the Government of Eritrea and the international community in completing the process of the voluntary return of the Eritrean refugees, provided that the causes that led them to flee ceased to exist with the establishment of their State. We reaffirm that the Government of the Sudan is also prepared to cooperate with the international community for the implementation of all the options provided for by generally recognized international conventions on the status of refugees, including their repatriation to any State they wish to go to, particularly as Eritrea makes the excuse that it is not ready or prepared to absorb them. We reaffirm that - until such time as that happens - these refugees merit every respect and protection, in accordance with international and regional instruments governing refuge and treatment of refugees. Accordingly, we appeal

to the Government of Eritrea, the international community and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide all the necessary resources to facilitate the return of the Eritrean refugees to their country.

In conclusion, the Government of the Sudan wishes to deny categorically that it had any connection with the alleged incident. As an expression of good will, the Government of the Sudan affirms its willingness to arrive at any bilateral agreement with the Eritrean Government concerning the measures required on the common border to preserve the security of the two countries.